



September 25, 2001

STATE OF MICHIGAN

**Family  
Independence  
Agency**

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Lansing, MI 48919

Letter to the Editor:

A recent story about the Food Stamp Program did not include information that provides a more realistic picture. In Michigan, the food stamp caseload increased from 250,652 in June 2000 to 287,730 in June 2001.

The Family Independence Agency has stationed staff in shelters and community agencies to help people apply. The FIA grants \$500,000 to the Michigan Food Bank Council annually, but still cannot document that people losing food stamp eligibility is a primary cause for increased food bank use.

Participation has dropped because of complex eligibility rules. While the Food Stamp Program will always be an important safety net, the U.S. Congress needs to reinvent it so we can better help people move to work. Then if participation does not return to levels of the 1980s, it will be the result of families achieving self-sufficiency.

After all, the goal is to help people become independent of government benefits, not more dependent.

Sincerely,

Douglas E. Howard



JOHN ENGLER, Governor